



July 9, 2001

FIELD OFFICE TECHNICAL GUIDE NOTICE ND-1

This notice provides guidance converting hard copy Field Office Technical Guide (FOTG) use to an on-line electronic copy. Effective July 9, 2001, portions of the FOTG will be posted on the North Dakota NRCS Website. The goal is to have the FOTG reviewed every five years or more often, as required by policy, to maintain technical adequacy and Tribal or urban needs. All FOTG information, maps, and resource data will be updated by December 2002. As databases, technical computer programs, and other electronic materials become available, they will be posted. Updating and keeping the electronic FOTG current will be more timely and less costly.

The State Conservationist is responsible for coordination of FOTG content across State lines for reasonable uniformity to assure interstate consistency within Major Land Resource Areas. NRCS employees must keep abreast of the latest science and technology to provide current natural resource technology to customers. Posting the FOTG on the North Dakota NRCS Website is essential to efficiently meet both demands. Currently, all offices are required to maintain an up-to-date hard copy of the FOTG for their work area. Problems arise when the existing FOTG is not kept properly filed or outdated material is retained in a "thunder book." Use of current FOTG hard copy does not meet the growing public expectation of electronic access to the latest natural resource information.

The North Dakota FOTG Committee's recommendation to convert from a hard copy FOTG to an electronic version was concurred in at the June 2001 North Dakota Management Team meeting. Ease of transition, maintenance, and use of the FOTG by field office personnel were key considerations for adopting the following strategy, which establishes procedures for maintaining up-to-date data in the FOTG.

- 1. Effective July 9, 2001, existing standards will be on the North Dakota NRCS Website <http://www.nd.nrcs.usda.gov/>.** As of July 9, 2001, a hard copy of Section IV, FOTG, is not required. Hard copies of new standards, revised standards, or updated technical materials will not be distributed unless only available in hard copy. In the future, e-mail notices to all employees will distribute FOTG information. The e-mails will have a brief explanation of the new technical information that will be posted on the North Dakota NRCS Website and will have a hot link for immediate reading of attachments. Users requiring a copy will need to print it from the Website. District conservationists are responsible for assuring all references or "thunder books" used by staff or provided to customers reflect current FOTG standards posted on the Website. Please be advised that each field office will need to decide

if they want to keep a hard copy of the FOTG; however, it is not required.

-2-

2. **Effective December 31, 2002, FOTG, Section IV standards will be updated into the new format and posted.** In the future, specifications will be separate from standards, but located at the same Website location. Available on the standards Website will be the standards, specifications, forms, record keeping and documentation information, reference information, and practice guidance documents, as developed. As electronic materials are available, hot links will be provided. Approximately 30 standards are reviewed and updated annually to keep up with science and technology changes. Until standards are in the new format, FOTG holders are to use the standards as posted.
3. **The FOTG updating and posting process agreed to are shown below.**

Section I, General Resource References	September 30, 2002
Section II, Soil and Site Information	March 31, 2002
Section III, Conservation Management Systems	December 31, 2001
Section IV, Standards (format change) Specifications	December 31, 2002
Section V, Conservation Practice Physical Effects	December 31, 2002

NRCS partners will be notified of this schedule. As natural resource information becomes available on other Websites, they will be hot linked for FOTG use.

4. **As natural resource information becomes available electronically, existing material in three-ring FOTG binders, North Dakota Recordkeeping & Documentation Guide, forms, etc., will be purged.** The State office will post new or update FOTG materials. As the FOTG is updated, standards, specifications, required and optional forms, and reference materials will be hot linked, as needed. This will result in hard copy format of forms and instructions being removed from the North Dakota Recordkeeping and Documentation Guide (RKDG), etc. As materials are removed from the existing FOTG or RKDG, directions will be provided to access the North Dakota NRCS Website for the latest information.
5. **Effective July 9, 2001, FOTG notices and register will be posted and maintained by the State office on North Dakota NRCS Website.** A master listing of previous FOTG notices and register will be posted on the FOTG Website. Employees will not need to maintain hard copies of the FOTG notices or register. The distributed FOTG notice will direct you to the new or updated natural resource materials on the North Dakota NRCS Website.
6. **Effective July 9, 2001, each FOTG section and subsection will contain a table of contents listing the material, date last revised, and date last reviewed by the North Dakota FOTG Committee.** An example in the specific Table of Contents listing in Section IV of an updated Fence standard is as follows: Section IV, Fence Standard, last revision June 15, 2001; last reviewed by North Dakota FOTG Committee on June 30, 2001. The table of contents may contain parts of cost tables changed and not the entire table. As FOTG users are notified, specific changes will be identified in the e-mail. Questions concerning Section

It will be directed to the State Soil Scientist. Questions on Sections I, III, IV, and V are to be directed to the State Resource Conservationist (SRC).

-3-

7. **Effective July 9, 2001, the State office will archive superceded FOTG standards, specifications, etc.** FOTG holders may obtain archived FOTG information as needed from the State office. Field offices will need to archive FOTG reference material specific to their work area as new information becomes available. The State office will not archive local work area technical information. Archived Highly Erodible Land (HEL) related 'Alternative Conservation Systems' compliance plans or similar data must be maintained for the appropriate number of years beyond the close of program contracts. Both current and archived program data should be placed in the appropriate program manual or correspondence file. When in doubt as to where such items are supposed to be filed, consult with area or State office staff for guidance. Field offices will be expected to maintain documentation and copies of any waivers granted to standards, specifications, or other technical material found in the FOTG.

Questions and comments should be directed to Myron Senechal, SRC, Bismarck, North Dakota, at 701-530-2085 or Myron.Senechal@nd.usda.gov.

/s/

THOMAS E. JEWETT
State Conservationist

DIST: FOTG